

**New Hampshire Water Sustainability Commission
Implementation Subcommittee**

January 24, 2012
Meeting Notes

Attendees: Virginia Battles-Raffa, Bob Beaurivage, John Gilbert, Cliff Sinnott, and Jennifer Rowden

Review of the draft issues and recommendations:

At the January 3rd meeting, subcommittee members were asked to draft priority issues and recommendations related to several topics the full Commission has discussed over the last few months. The intent is to bring a draft list to the full Commission meeting on February 14th to further refine and prioritize. The subcommittee discussed the need to address topics on the state level versus the watershed level, and the need to identify what is allowed to be addressed by municipalities, regional entities, state agencies or the federal government. The work being done in Great Bay was noted as a good example of there being a common issue to address, reducing nutrient inputs, where it may be better to issue permits on a regional/watershed basis than town-by-town.

Virginia indicated the difficulty in drafting issues and recommendations for the topic of watershed management because of how inter-related the topic is to other core areas of the Commission's work. She pointed out that part of the challenge in addressing many of these issues is that many different entities are responsible for various small aspects of the same issue. Virginia suggested that there should be a watershed management agency at the state level that is charge with integrating the various aspects of managing water resources. This central agency would help to coordinate items like permits at the watershed level, and have staff focus on a particular watershed but be knowledgeable about all the various water laws and regulations. Cliff noted that the current regulatory structure does not always encourage the most cost effective remediation planning. (For example, is upgrading the wastewater treatment plants in the Seacoast the most cost effective way to reduce nitrogen in Great Bay or might it just be the easiest target regulatory wise?) The group discussed the need to break down regulatory barriers, to have institutions that are able to be flexible and integrated. Perhaps the recommendation needs to be general, such as the state promoting integrated and coordinated watershed management and planning.

Cliff presented the two topics he worked on.

Topic	Issue	Recommendation	Source, if applicable
Non-point Source Pollution - Stormwater Runoff and Water Quality	1) Land conversion from forested landscape to impervious surfaces	Continue active state, local and private land conservation and protection efforts (with a 25% protected landscape goal?)	Multiple: Primer, SPNHF, many others
	2) Lack of adequate riparian buffers	Maintain and strengthen CSPA and augment with local shoreland and non-isolated wetland buffer protections	Primer, Land Use Commission, others
	3) Cumulative effect of multiple, dispersed, larger unregulated pollution sources	Implement integrated watershed planning approaches that integrate point and non-point remedies to address impaired waters status	Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, EPA, DES
	4) Inadequate understanding of sources and effective management / mitigation techniques	Encourage development and redevelopment which limits the addition of impervious surface (i.e. smart growth)	Primer, general Smartgrowth principles, OEP, DES, RPCs

	5) Inadequate and inconsistent regulatory framework and funding for implementation	Require best-practice storm water management and low-impact-development techniques for all new development and redevelopment.	Primer
Adequacy of Water Supply - Water Quantity	1) Protection of existing and future surface and groundwater water supply sources	Continue and expand DES source water supply program and increase leverage with local and NGO land conservation activities.	
	2) Preparing for increased frequency and severity of drought as a consequence of climate change	Development state and local adaptation plans for water supply, addressing storage, supply buffers, drought management procedures, system interconnections	
	3) Managing competing demands between domestic and commercial water supply, and between private and public water supply	(Placeholder for a recommendation addressing prioritization / allocation / fair use of water supply among competing users)	
	4) Making adequate investment in aging water supply infrastructure	Increase availability of state revolving loan fund and matching grant assistance to public water supply systems, funding through user fees	
	5) Ensuring safety of private well water supply	Implement private well testing requirements at property sale or transfer	

Comments from Cliff's suggested issues and recommendations included:

- The many of the issues and/or recommendations are connected to other topics the Commission has discussed, particularly the connection between land use, non-point source pollution and watershed management. There needs to be a mechanism to show which recommendations actually impact several topics or issues.
- Under water supply, is there a need to expand such programs as the DES Water Supply Land Protection Grant program or is there enough land protection occurring through other means that this Commission does not need to make that specific of a recommendation?
- There was no specific recommendation for how to deal with prioritization of water users, particularly when demand may exceed available quantity. This may be necessary for short time periods such as during summer drought conditions, or may be a more long-term issue for areas with varying water demands and limited water availability.
- Should promotion of water conservation and efficiency be included under this topic, or should it be included in an overarching public education recommendation?
- If recommendations such as making adequate investments in infrastructure are made, but the Commission is avoiding making specific funding recommendations, should possible options at least be suggested? These could include the development of infrastructure banks or allowing smaller systems to combine to take advantage of the economy of scale. Or the recommendation could simply state that water rates need to suggest the true cost of water.

Bob focused on issues directly related to water infrastructure priorities, listed by infrastructure type, with the general statement that:

"Reliable water infrastructure is vitally important to the citizens of New Hampshire. The prosperity of future generations is dependent upon sustainable water resources and the infrastructure to convey those resources."

The overlapping needs/issues for the various infrastructure types (stormwater, dams, drinking water systems and wastewater systems) included the following:

- Replacement and/or management of aging infrastructure.
- Funding to make improvements at the local, state and federal levels.

- Challenge of meeting state and federal standards for drinking water and wastewater (particularly for smaller systems).
- Declining revenues and affordability, i.e. the true cost of producing drinking water and treating wastewater.
- Managing/maintaining infrastructure owned by municipalities and private citizens, i.e. stormwater infrastructure and dams.
- Adapting infrastructure to the impacts of climate change.
- General need for more public education on the issues related to water infrastructure, particularly costs.

The group discussed possible general recommendations for the above listed issues related to water infrastructure, including:

- Integrating stormwater and wastewater treatment permits on a watershed level rather than community by community.
- Encouraging cost-sharing of services amongst municipalities and water systems.

Action item: Continue to work on draft issues and recommendations list for the next subcommittee meeting (topics listed below) and begin to discuss the areas where each issues or recommendations overlap with one another.

Watershed Management and Planning (Virginia)
Water Ownership and Value of Water (Marcy)
Water Infrastructure - Drinking Water, Wastewater, Dams and Stormwater (Bob)
Non-point Source Pollution - Stormwater Runoff and Water Quality (Cliff)
Floods, Drought, and Climate Change - Adaptive Management (John)
Adequacy of Water Supply - Water Quantity (Cliff)
Water Quality (John)

The next Water Sustainability Commission Implementation Subcommittee meeting will be held on February 7th from 1:00 to 3:00 at DES.